

GOLF COURSE DEVELOPMENT - 1979 A LOOK AT WHAT'S HAPPENING

With 317 new golf courses or additions to existing facilities in some stage of construction throughout the nation at year end, 1979 should be a good year for new golf course openings.

Prolonged unusual weather conditions in many regions of the country resulted in numerous construction delays which in turn caused fewer golf courses to be completed than were anticipated in 1978. The 143 new course openings during 1978 are 59 less than the 202 new facilities reported for 1977.

As in 1977, Florida again led all states in 1978 for new course openings with 25; followed by Michigan - 15; Texas - 11; Ohio - 10; Arizona - 8 and California, Colorado, Illinois and South Carolina each reporting - 6. In addition to Florida, Michigan, Texas, Arizona and California were also in the first ten states for openings in 1977.

Forty-six percent of the new course openings in 1978 were additions to existing facilities - continuing to denote excellent stability in the overall golf course business. In 1977, additions accounted for 44 percent of the total.

Regulation length course openings, including additions, for the year totalled 114. There were 25 new executive or middle length layouts of which 9 were additions and 4 new par-3 courses. About 20 percent of the new openings in 1978 were short courses- 12 percent in 1977.

Of the 114 regulation length courses opening for play during 1978, approximately 52 percent were daily fee operations, 31 percent were private and 15 percent were municipal.

Sixty four percent of the 25 executive (middle size) courses opening in 1978 were daily fee type- 24 percent were municipal and 12 percent private. Of the four new par-3 openings three were daily fee and one - municipal.

Golf developments associated with planned residential ventures or resort operations made a turn-around in 1978 as predicted a year ago. Of the 143 new courses opening 38.5 percent were a part of such ventures; was only 27 percent in 1977.

What's Ahead in 1979

Let's take a look at the 103 courses that went under construction during 1978. California led the states in new construction starts with 14 courses, followed by Florida with 11, Arizona and Pennsylvania had 7 each, Illinois - 6 and Texas and Michigan - 5 each.

Eighty eight of the new starts were regulation length courses; the remaining 15 (about 14%) were executive and par-3 layouts. Almost 43 percent of the new projects are additions to existing facilities.

Almost 40 percent of the regulation courses going under construction in 1978 were daily fee type, 36+ percent were private and 20 percent were municipal. The remaining three percent were school, military or industrial.

For several years there have been many changes in golf course ownership across the country. In many cases, it was the transfer of real estate development golf facilities from the developer to the home owners associations after the land sales were accomplished.

For courses that were operated as daily fee courses during the development stage, this transfer entails a great change in operations if the home owners desire to convert to a private club.

As reported a year ago, there are still many golf facilities in the "for sale" category. Just how many no one knows for certain. One realtor specializing in golf and country club properties (McKay Realty of Lansing, Michigan) lists almost 150 courses for sale in 33 states in its January 1979 quarterly bulletin.

Leading states with course for sale offerings were New York - 19, Florida - 14, Pennsylvania - 12, Michigan - 10 and California and Indiana each 7.

Most sellers, after a reasonable downpayment, are willing to finance the balance on a land contract or mortgage with favorable interest rates according to Cecil R. McKay of the aforementioned realty firm.

Many municipalities throughout the nation are meeting their needs for golf facilities by purchasing available local area golf courses with the aid of Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (formerly BOR) matching grants administered by HCRS, U.S. Department of Interior. The fiscal 1979 appropriation for the HCRS program is \$369,790,000; was \$306,070,000 in 1978.

Apportionments among the 50 states ranged from \$27,212,832 for California to \$2,818,234 for Wyoming. For information on HCRS funds (which are available only to municipalities) within the various states contact your state HCRS Liaison Officer, an appointee of the governor of each state.

Since this program was authorized by Congress 14 years ago, \$1.7 billion in matching grants have been made available to states and territories to purchase over 1.9 million acres of land and to fund almost 15,000 projects for development of outdoor recreation facilities. This money, when matched by the state or local political subdivisions has provided a total investment of over \$3.4 billion. Golf is only one of the many types of recreation projects that is eligible for matching grants.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund, from which HCRS receives its funds, is financed by revenues the Federal Government receives from royalties on offshore oil and mineral drillings, sales of surplus real properties and motorboat fuel taxes. The bulk of the fund, however, is derived from outer continental shelf oil and gas leases collected by the Department of Interior.

Private/Public Sector Cooperation

More and more private and public sectors in various regions of the country are working together in the development of needed golf facilities for their respective communities. Some municipalities are offering longterm leases of municipal property to private enterprise for the development and operation of public golf courses.

Much is being said and written about wastewater irrigation for recreational turf today. Golf course builders and operators who are seeking ways to cut irrigation costs may discover the answer by meeting with their local municipality or independent sanitary district.

The use of low-cost wastewater as an irrigant for recreational turf is steadily increasing. More than 75 golf courses in the nation are already using wastewater irrigation. In order to spur wastewater use for irrigation and help the national government reduce pollution in the country's streams and lakes, it is possible to receive a grant up to 85 percent of the cost of approved projects. Further information on this program may be obtained from your Regional Environmental Protection Agency Office.

FOR THE FINEST IN SOD

THORNTON'S TURF NURSERY

312 - 742-5030

Rt. 2 Box 72

Elgin, Ill.